DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 219 686 CG 016 110

AUTHOR Sederberg, Nancy
TITLE Stress: A Conceptual Integration with a Focus on Family Violence.
PUB DATE 13 Oct 81
NOTE 25p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Council on Family Relations (Milwaukee, WI, October 13-17, 1981).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage
DESCRIPTORS *Adjustment (to Environment); Behavior Patterns; *Coping; Family (Sociological Unit); *Family Problems; *Family Relationship; Job Satisfaction; Models; Problem Solving; Responses; Socialization; Stimuli; *Stress Variables
IDENTIFIERS *Family Violence; *Life Events

ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the concept of stress by drawing from social-psychological, occupational, family, and medical perspectives. A model of stress based on an integration of these perspectives is developed and then applied to the family relationship over time. The components of the model consist of: (1) a stressor stimulus, any situation that may provide disruption or threat; (2) response capabilities, learned or acquired skills to deal with the stimulus; (3) response choice; and (4) stress level that determines the degree of success of the response choice. Using the model, the author suggests that family violence is more likely to occur when family members experience stress during certain family stages and when they have previously learned violence in family or occupational settings. The relationship of family violence and exposure to violence on the job is also considered as a factor contributing to violence in the home setting. (Author/JAC)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

Revised 4/82

STRESS: A CONCEPTUAL INTEGRATION WITH A FOCUS ON FAMILY VIOLENCE

by

Nancy Sederberg*
Valparaiso University

NCFR Theory-Methods Workshop
Milwaukee, Wisconsin
October 13, 1981

*Department of Sociology, Valparaiso University, Valparaiso, Indiana 46383

ED219686

CG 016110

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Nancy Sederberg

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

STRESS: A CONCEPTUAL INTEGRATION WITH A FOCUS ON FAMILY VIOLENCE

by

Nancy Sederberg

Rationale

Even though the stress concept has been used in a variety of fields (medicine, psychology, social psychology, family sociology, and occupational sociology to name a few), the concept has not been clarified for consistent application between fields of inquiry. The use of the term stress in much of the current lay literature has added to the confusion. Some researchers have focused on the outcome (the stress response or the manifestations of stress), some on the situations which lead to stress (the stressors), some on the cognitive appraisal of stress (the meaning of the stressor to the individual), and some on the coping mechanisms (responses to the outcomes of stress).

If stress is to be clarified conceptually, stress theory must take into account the sequence of events that occur between the impact of the stressor and the outcome, which could be a manifestation of stress or another way of coping. Stress theory in general then involves relationships between the event or the stressor, the individual, and the outcome, or how the individual manages or copes with the stressor. These relationships take place through time, and involve feedback.

The conceptual integration of stress perspectives and the emergent model discussed here provide a way to view stress as a process that occurs over time. The flow of events which lead to family violence as one possible outcome are the focus of this paper.

Note: This paper is based in part on my doctoral dissertation. I would like to thank Dr. David Klein and Dr. Joan Aldous for their insightful comments and suggestions, particularly in regard to the development of the model.

Stress: An Integrated Model

The approach taken in this section is to develop an integrated stress framework which can then be applied to the study of intrafamily violence in general. The evidence presented demonstrates that the timing of family and work events are stress producing, and the resultant stress could underlie many of the dynamics of family conflict and violence. A framework which describes the process of stress over time most appropriately meshes with the perspective developed in this research to explain the eruption of family violence over time.

General Stress Framework

The general stress framework presented in this section is adapted from the work by Farrington (1980). I have slightly reorganized his stress components where appropriate for the purposes of my discussion. This was done in order to demonstrate more specifically the relevance of the dimensions of family and work that I feel are important in this discussion of stress and intrafamily violence.

The field of stress has been marred by conceptual confusion, as well as inconsistent methods used to study the problem of stress (Farrington, 1980). The difficulties in the literature became extremely apparent as I attempted to integrate the work stress and family stress literature. I concluded that the integrated model already developed by Farrington (1980) most adequately presented the basic elements necessary for my purposes here.

Stress has been defined as a stimulus, as a crisis, as a response to a stimulus, and as a state of the organism as it responds to the stimulus (Hill, 1958; Mechanic, 1962; Selye, 1976; Dohrenwend and Dohrenwend, 1974). Other theorists have used the term stress to refer to the field which studies all of these dimensions (Lazarus, 1966; McGrath, 1970). This latter approach is the one used here in the model proposed to explain family violence and its relationship to stress.

According to Farrington (1980), the framework of stress has six components. I have reorganized Farrington's list by including objective and subjective demands under the discussion of the stressor stimulus.

1. The Stressor Stimulus. The stimulus refers to any situation or condition encountered by a family member that is capable of providing disruption or threat for the person. When the stressful situation occurs, it imposes a demand on the family member, which requires some kind of response. The response can be to either alleviate the stress or its effects or to remove the threat of danger or disruption, which could include denial.

It is not just the impact of a one time event or a single stimulus that is stressful, but the wear and tear caused by an accumulation of demands can also be stress producing (Scott and Howard, 1970; Selye, 1976). A family member may feel the impact of a stressor stimulus more acutely when family and work events have piled up over a short period of time, or when events that have placed repeated demands on the family member deplete the resources that the person has at his or her disposal. Hence, the timing of the stimulus may be a critical element to consider.

Positive as well as negative stimuli can be stress producing, because both types produce demands on the family member (Holmes and Rahe, 1967; Selye, 1976). Thus family and work events that are planned for and expected can place demands on the family member just as family and work events that are unplanned for and unexpected. In addition, the objective and subjective differences in ascribing positive or negative values to the stimuli pose a methodological problem. A promotion may be regarded by the researcher as a positive event; yet the family member, who sees turmoil ahead if the family is forced to make a geographical move in conjunction with the job promotion, may regard the promotion as a

negative event.

All stimuli in the social environment then have the potential of producing stress for some individuals. Family members will respond to the perception of the event as well as to the event itself. This aspect has been discussed in some detail as "cognitive appraisal" (Lazarus, 1967), where the family member defines the situation as threatening or nonthreatening.

a. Objective Demands. This refers to the objective reality of a given demand situation. The family member experiences these demands independently of the cognitive processes of definition and perception. It is difficult to assess these apart from the sociological and psychological definitions of the situation, but stressors that are a real threat to the life of the family member would be defined as imposing objective demands.

b. Subjective Demands. No stimulus is a stressor to all persons who encounter it (Appley and Trumbull, 1967; 1977). Due to individual differences in socialization, learning and experiences, individuals react differently to the stressor stimulus. What is important is that the individual has defined the stimulus as threatening. Once the stimulus is defined as threatening, it follows the individual will then act in some manner to respond to the threat. If the family member has learned that the use of violence is an appropriate way to respond to the threat, then he or she will be likely to use the same response under the current perceived threatening circumstances. Stressors that the family member perceives to be a threat to the quality of life of the family member himself or herself as well as to the unity of the family would impose subjective demands.

2. Response Capabilities. Capabilities refer to the learned or acquired skills, attributes, and resources that family members have at their disposal to

deal with the stressor stimuli. Some of these capabilities would include previous problem solving experience, of which violence might be one alternative. Other capabilities would include motivation to deal with the situation, the amount of physical and psychological energy available to deal with the situation, a level of intelligence and creativity to assess the situation and to deal with it adequately, the ability to control one's emotional state (loss of control could result in violence), and the actual as well as perceived social support available to deal with the situation. These are many of the same dimensions of family problems skills that have been discussed by Aldous, Condon, Hill, Straus and Tallman (1971), and coping skills as discussed by Pearlin and Schooler (1978). These capabilities then provide a repertoire of possible responses that the family members can then tap when faced with stressful situations.

3. Choice of Response. When the family member is faced with a stressful situation, he/she must make a choice from the repertoire of responses available, or may choose to avoid the situation by leaving it physically or psychologically through denial. This is similar to the old "fight or flight" syndrome (Cox, 1978; 73-74). Just as family members vary in what they perceive as stressful situations, they also vary in what they choose as a proper response.

In addition, the timing of the choice becomes a factor. The family member may choose to respond too soon, which depletes his energy and renders him ineffective when it comes time to deal with the main event. Or the family member may miscalculate and respond too late, also an ineffective decision.

The choice of response will also be affected by what the family member perceives to be the short term or long term consequences of the stressor. The family member may choose a response that works on the short term, such as hitting one's spouse, but which will have detrimental effects in the long run,

such as marital dissolution.

4. Stress Level. If the response made to the stressor stimulus is sufficient to meet the demands, whether they are objective or subjective demands, stress is no longer problematic. This success in dealing with the stressor will increase the probability that like problems will be dealt with similarily in the future (Scott and Howard, 1970).

If the response is not sufficient to meet the demands of the stressor, due to an insufficient or inappropriate response, or an ill-timed response, the family member will not be successful in handling the stressor situation. The resultant failure or inability to deal with the situation could increase the level of stress the family member experiences under the circumstances. If the stressor is dealt with only on the short term, the family member may have difficulty dealing with the additional stress of the unexpected long term consequences. This points to the circular nature of stress, where the stress response becomes a stressor event which demands another response.

According to the general stress model (Farrington, 1980), stress is a "constant" in human experience. Individuals and groups adapt by developing a stress level at which they can function most effectively. Changes in the stress level occur when the discrepancy between demands and response capabilities is too little or too much. McGrath (1970) uses "underload" and "overload" to distinquish these conditons. Farrington (1980) cites additional evidence to support the contention that the system is just as vulnerable when too few demands are made as when too many demands are made. This perspective could illuminate the effects of unemployment on the family, where boredom combined with income insufficiency produces family stressors which are also tied to intrafamily conflict and violence.

The stress level then involves a balance between the demands placed by the environment and the response capabilities of the family member (McGrath, 1970). The greater the discrepancy, the greater will be the experienced stress level. If the stress level becomes intolerable, negative consequences could occur which could precipitate additional problems for the family member. The use of violence in the family could be a consequence of intolerable stress, especially if violence is among the response capabilities of the family member.

Application of Stress Model to Family Violence

Some theorists have used "stress" to explain child abuse (Gil, 1971; Gelles, 1973; Justice and Justice, 1976; Conger, Burgess, and Barrett, 1979). Most recently, Farrington (1980) and Straus, Gelles, and Steinmetz (1980) have used stress to explain intrafamily violence. Yet because of the lack of consistency in the stress literature in regard to conceptualization, as well as methodology, it is difficult to assess the importance of stress in the family violence literature.

The life events scale (Holmes and Rahe, 1967) describes events which have been assessed as problematic and to which readjustment is required and which therefore could be interpreted as stressful. In fact, Straus, Gelles, and Steinmetz (1980) adapt the scale, shorten the number of items used, and call the result "stress." I will discuss their study in more detail.

The Straus, Gelles and Steinmetz (1980) study was based on interviews conducted in 1976 with 2,143 persons (960 men and 1,183 women) beyween 18 and 65 years of age. The persons chosen for the probability sample represented "families" similar to the census data for the population of the United States. Yet this study, the only major national probability study on violence reported to date, has some shortcomings.

The sample included only intact families, and 1,146 of these families had

children between the ages of 3 and 17 living at home. It did not include interviews with single-parent families, where child abuse is believed to be higher, as well as the possibilities of violence which could have led to marital dissolution. Nor did it include an assessment of parent-child relations with children under three years of age. The pregnancy, infant and pre-school years have been shown in the research to be a time in the family which could be extremely stressful (Aldous, 1978).

In order to assess stress in the families interviewed, Straus, Gelles and Steinmetz adapted the Holmes and Rahe (1967) life events assessment to their study. The scores used in their resultant Stress Index ranged from 0-18, with a mean of 2.4. Straus, Gelles, and Steinmetz (1980) found that the relationships between the problems reported in the interviews and the level of violence reported was "quite strong" (p. 184). The chance that spouse abuse would occur in a family increased with each additional problem reported. For example, according to their charts, when 0-1 events were reported, the rate of wife and husband abuse was less than five percent. Yet when ten or more events were reported, the rate of wife abuse rose to about 25 percent and the rate of husband abuse rose to nearly 50 percent (p. 184-185). Therefore certain life events experienced in a short period of time (the previous year, 1975, in this study) could precipitate violence between mates under certain circumstances.

As the family encounters not only the expected changes in their family and work careers, they also encounter unexpected or unplanned for events. As they attempt to deal with these events, or stressors, the family members must choose responses from their repertoire of available responses. As aptly pointed out by Goode (1971), the potential to use violence is an important resource, particularly for family members who feel they need to reassert their power. If the violence

potential has been reinforced by norms from family and work which sanction its use in stressful situations, the likelihood of violence being used as a violent response to the demands of the current stressful situation are increased.

The family may be more "violence prone" at certain family stages than others. In particular, the early stressful stage of childbearing and the later stage of adolescence would place demands on the family member which produce a violent response. Timing and ordering of events in the family and work careers are related to lower earnings for the worker and to marital instability (Hogan, 1978; 1980). In addition, the pile-up or accumulation of events over the life course may deplete the resources (social, emotional, or financial) that a family can muster to meet the demands of its stressful problems (Oppenheimer, 1974). If family members have been socialized to use violence because they have seen or heard violence used in previous stressful work and family situations, they will be likely to resort to violence when faced with current or future stressful work and family events.

The model presented here takes into account the family (internal) and work (external) events that are likely to produce stress, and the resource of learning violence as a response to stress. This learning then increases the likelihood that the stress that results from the events will be accompanied by the use of violence in the family. An important underlying dimension of this model is timing. If work and family events occur close together and result in a pile-up, or if events accumulate over time and deplete the resources of the family, the impact of the stressor will be greater, and will increase the probability that a violent response will occur.

Learning Violence: The Family and Work

According to social learning theory, persons learn violent behavior and

aggressive behavior much the same way they learn other types of behavior (Bandura and Walters, 1963; Bandura, 1973 and 1977; Gelles and Straus, 1979; Farrington, 1980). Thus one explanation to account for why persons are likely to react to stressors in family and work by using violence is their "vulnerability", or their previous experience with or exposure to violent behavior. Persons who have seen other persons use violence, have heard about others who use violence as a means of dealing with stressors or stress, or have themselves been the victim of violence are likely to use violence when they are faced with similar stressful situations.

Family members may be likely to use violence against other family members in their family of procreation then because they themselves first experienced violence in their family of orientation. Vulnerability, or the likelihood that violence will be used in the family of procreation as a response to work and family stressors results then from a family history of violence. Existing research demonstrates how persons who have grown up in violent homes are more likely to be violent as spouses, and as parents. The violent home seems to be one in which the person observed conjugal violence, observed parent-child violence, or was a victim of violence (Kempe, et al., 1962; Steele and Pollock, 1968; Gil, 1971; Gelles, 1974; Steinmetz and Straus, 1974; Justice and Justice, 1976; Prescott and Letko, 1977; Steinmetz, 1977; Gelles and Straus, 1979 a&b; Straus, Gelles and Steinmetz, 1980). Marital and parental roles are learned in the family of orientation through the process of socialization. The learning of roles, norms, and the experience of being on the receiving end of a violent act teaches the family member that using violence is an appropriate way of dealing with family stressors.

Owens and Straus (1975), in a secondary analysis of a large nationally representative sample on exposure to violence in childhood and approval of violence as an adult, show that the more violence experienced by a child as observer or victim the greater the tendency to favor the use of violence as an adult. Gelles (1972: 173) found that the respondents in his study of 80 New England families who had seen their parents engage in physical violence were more likely to physically fight with their own spouses than were persons who never saw their parents physically fight. Gelles (1976) reported that 66 percent of the women who had observed spousal violence in their family of orientation were victims of wife beatings in their family of procreation.

This socialization to the use of violence in the family of orientation, especially when the use of violence is rewarded in some way, will increase the likelihood that the person will resort to violence when faced with stressors of change in his or her family of procreation. This social learning of violence is supported by the argument that the family is a "training ground" for violence (Steinmetz and Straus, 1974; Steinmetz, 1977). Yet, not all persons who use physical violence in their conjugal relationships were exposed to violence in their families of orientation. We must look then for an additional "training ground."

As family members move through their life cycles, and enter the world of work, they are exposed to the norms of their occupational cultures. Kanter (1977), indicated that occupational culture was one of the five dimensions of work that were important for family relationships. Just as families socialize their members, so do occupations socialize their members (Holland, 1959). In particular, Kohn (1969), and Steinmetz (1971) point out how the values learned in the context of occupation affect family values, especially child rearing values and

the way children are disciplined. These modes of discipline and the norms surrounding them, once learned, could then be carried over into the family of procreation established later by that child.

Norms and values regarding the use of violence may be learned on the job by hearing about violence as well as using it. This includes being associated with violence on the job itself, participating in occupational roles in which violence is used, or roles in which the worker associates with violent persons.

To go a step further, I would suggest that exposure to violent models so essential for military training and police work could increase the likelihood that aggression and violence learned in those roles could spill over into family relations. A study of the military environment and its effects on the levels of child abuse (Shwed and Straus, 1979) supports this position. In fact, according to their research, abuse seems to increase with each successive occupational situs that is associated with violence. A situs is a dimension of work that refers to functional similarity. In other words, a situs encompasses "all those jobs, occupations, and professions which share a common function, mission or focus of activity" (Samuel and Lewin-Epstein, 1979: 627). The work of Samuel and Lewin-Epstein (1979) supports the case for an occupational situs to be used as a predictor of work values, which in turn could affect the family member's use of violence.

Some of the occupations where exposure to overt violence occurs (where job holders see violent acts and use violence) are police work and the military, which are agencies of social control. Others who may be exposed to violence by seeing the results of violence (i.e., have a secondhand basis of exposure because they deal with the consequences of those who use violence or treat abused persons, or hear about violent acts) are physicians, social workers, lawyers, judges,

marriage counselors, and psychiatrists. Interestingly, there are also occupations which have particularly stressful characteristics as well. This exposure to violence could be carried over into their families, especially if the violence used was rewarded in some way and if the job holders are faced with stressors in the family and on their jobs. Many persons may thus find themselves in job conditions in which the results of violence create a predisposition in them to engage in violence in their own families. The likelihood for violence to be used by these persons would be reinforced if the person had also been exposed to violence in the family of orientation. Seeing violent behavior rewarded could increase the likelihood that violence would be used by the observer at a later time (Bandura, 1977).

Two of the early studies on family violence (Straus, 1971; Steinmetz, 1971) imply that the dimension of occupational culture is a factor in the propensity to use of violence in the family. Straus (1971), used data from a sample of 229 university students in undergraduate sociology classes at the University of Minnesota and the University of New Hampshire. An anonymous questionnaire used for a class research project provided the data for his study.

Students were asked about the use of physical punishment during their last year in high school, and to indicate whether their mother or their father had initiated the punishment. Physical punishment consisted of two dimensions: (1) hitting or slapping, and (2) threatening to hit or slap. The results indicated that 52.3% of the respondents had experienced actual or threatened physical punishment during their last year in high school. Consistent with the discussion of family development, the last year of high school is often a time of stress, especially if the family is experiencing the effects of the "life cycle squeeze" (Oppenheimer, 1974).

Straus used as social class indicators the father's education, the mother's education, and the father's occupation. He found no differences due to social class and the parent's use of physical punishment during the child's last year of high school. To explain the results, Straus developed a "linkage theory." He asserted that the socialization practices used in the family will tend to be congruent with the type of personality the parents feel the child will need to cope with the typical life chances the child will face as an adult. Thus the childrearing practices for these families, Straus felt, reflected not the current life conditions of the social class of the parents, but the anticipated life conditions of the child. Because the young people in his sample were college students, it could be assumed that their families were concerned about upward mobility. Therefore the parents of these students operated with anticipatory socialization to teach their children through the type of punishment used, not the norms of the current conditions, but the norms of the class position they were expected to hold as adults. Since most of these college students would be aspiring to occupations classified as middle class, this might then account for the fact that no differences existed between the social class of the parents and the use of physical punishment.

Since there were no differences found in Straus's study (1971) between the use of physical punishment during the child's last year in high school and the social class of the parents as defined by education and occupation, we need to look beyond the standard class indicators he used and look more at work tasks, work norms, and the varieties of work cultures that reflect a world view of work situations. Some of these dimensions were suggested by Steinmetz (1971) as indicators to better discriminate between those persons who use physical punishment and those who do not.

Steinmetz (1971) also used college students in an introductory sociology class to replicate Straus's study. Her small sample (N=17) yielded results similar to Straus's. For example, 53 percent of her respondents, as compared to 52.3 percent of Straus's, reported the use or threat of punishment during their last year in high school. And as in the Straus study, Steinmetz found no important differences due to social class in the use of physical punishment.

However, when Steinmetz analyzed the data according to the types of tasks required by the individual on the job as defined by Holland's (1959) concept of occupational environment, interesting differences in the use of punishment emerged. The respondents who were classified as "motoric" (such as laborers, machine operators, farmers, truck drivers) and "persuasive" (which includes salesworkers, politicians, business executives) had similar punishment scores (1.4 and 1.5), whereas respondents who were classified as "conforming" (such as bank tellers, secretaries, bookkeepers and file clerks) reported no physical punishment. Steinmetz felt these differences were as a result of the differences in child-rearing techniques presumably associated with the occupational environment, and the personality characteristics of the worker, who in this case was the father. If the occupational environment and personality of the father are important to consider, then we need also to question what effect the working mother would have on the type of discipline used in the family, and in addition, how much her occupational environment, in conjunction with the occupation of the husband-father, affects the dynamics of the family relationship. Occupational contexts and contents, which cut across social class, could better provide evidence for the occupationally induced behavior and values concerning violence that could become part of the family member-worker repertoire of responses.

In addition to the occupational culture which has norms that directly affect

the use of physical punishment in the family, occupational norms could operate to prevent the perpetrator as well as the victim of family violence from seeking help. The "Jekyll and Hyde" marriages discussed by Marsden and Owens (1975) and Marsden (1978) address this phenomenon. Because of the norms for tight standards of conventionality and family privacy in certain occupations, the male who is violent in his family appears to be a "moral exemplar" to the outside world. Because of his social standing in the community, this violent husband-father would stand to lose a great deal from public exposure of his actions. Therefore he and his family make an active attempt to conceal the violence that occurs within their home, and deny the need to seek help. Therefore the "Jekyll and Hyde" marriages keep many women locked into the relationship by both practical and ideological barriers.

Terry Davidson (1978) wrote from personal experience of the violence that occurred between her clergyman father and her mother. Her description of the family dynamics that occurred as her mother refused to seek help for the beatings that occurred, and the resultant necessity to maintain a proper family image to the members of the community in order to protect the job of the husband-father, supports the typology of the "Jekyll and Hyde" marriage.

Some examples of occupations which stress the norms of family privacy and require high standards of conventionality from their members are vicars, doctors, lawyers, schoolteachers, social workers and policemen (Marsden, 1978). Not so coincidentially, these same occupations have stressful components, particularly in regard to time demands and the exposure to violence.

Little existing research has directly investigated the relationship between conjugal violence and specified job characteristics I believe may be important for learning violence as a strategy for coping with stress. Nor has existing violence

research investigated the impact of work and family stages as stressors which could precipitate conjugal violence. The model proposed here is an integration of the worlds of work and family, from which I have derived propositions. These propositions could spur further investigation and dimensions of family and work as precipitants in order to determine stressors which could lead to family violence.

Propositions on Orienting Model

The general perspective taken in this paper is reflected in the proposition below and diagrammed in the accompanying figure.

Proposition I. Life events produce stress.

I do not assume that all life events are stressful, nor do I assume that different events are equal in their stressful consequences. The subjective meaning attached to the event mediates the effect of the event and the resultant stress.

Proposition II. Stress is a necessary but not sufficient condition for family violence.

Proposition IIa. The greater the stress, the more likely family violence is to occur.

Stress is viewed as a precipitator of family violence. Some intrafamily violence may be caused by factors which are operating even when stress is absent, but I view this as highly unlikely. More importantly, stress does not operate alone to produce violence, even when stress comes simultaneously from a variety of sources. Instead, the response to stress will be in the form of intrafamily violence only when certain other conditons, to be specified below, are present

I do not assume that intrafamily violence is the only response to stress experienced by family members. There are a variety of ways to cope with stress. However, the purpose here is not to compare the use of violence with other coping

strategies. Furthermore, even when violence is a response to stress, that violence may be manifested in a variety of ways toward a variety of objects or persons. Thus a range of intrafamily violent behavior would be consistent with these propositions.

Proposition III. Violence is learned behavior.

Proposition IIIa. The more contexts in which violence has been learned as an acceptable and efficacious behavior, the more likely is violence to occur.

Proposition IIIb. Learning is a necessary but not sufficient condition for violence.

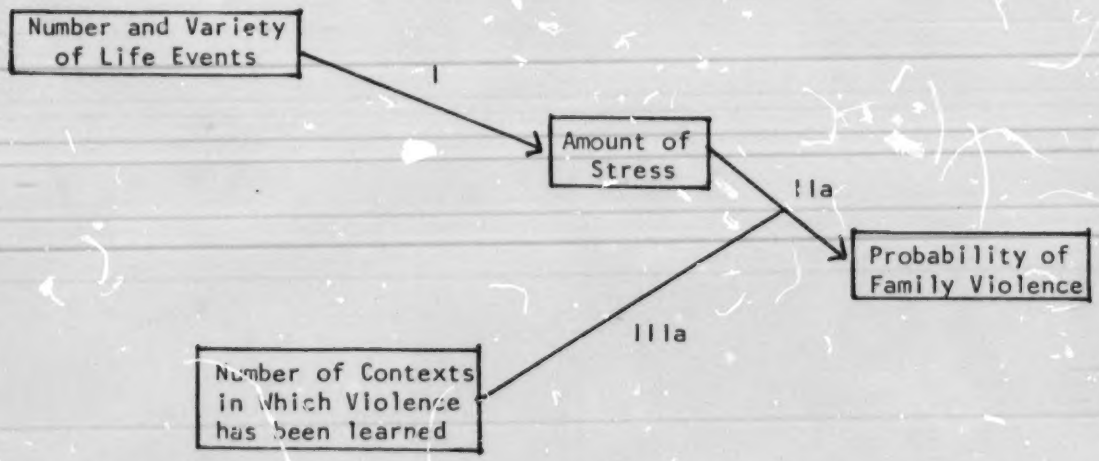
I do not assume that violence is genetically programmed behavior. Instead, I take the position that it is learned in the course of social interaction. Furthermore, learning is viewed as dynamic rather than mechanical. People do not learn merely by exposure or by unreflected imitation. Hence, it is only when violence is viewed either as an acceptable (normatively prescribed) response or an efficacious one (perceived to produce desirable outcomes) that violence will occur.

Since learning occurs in a variety of socialization contexts, there is no guarantee that these contexts will reinforce each other in the promotion or exhibition of violence. Therefore, I am assuming that violence increases in likelihood as multiple contexts tend to coalesce around a common definition of violence and its functionality.

Finally, like stress, learning is viewed here as an important but insufficient basis for predicting or explaining violence. Learning violence constitutes a predisposition to act violently. In addition, however, there must be an opportunity for violence to be expressed. I argue that it is the condition of stress, operating at a sufficient level, which provides the opportunity. This implies that stress and

learning interact in the production of violent behavior. Stress without learning will result in some other response to the stress. Learning without stress will keep violence at a "latent" level, ready to occur when the situation becomes appropriate. It is because stress and learning interact in their effects that the accompanying diagram shows the paths to violence along a split-tailed arrow. Were separate paths drawn to violence, that would imply that stress and learning have independent effects on violence. This implication is decidedly not a part of my model. Instead, I propose that it is only the combination of stress and learning violence which results in intrafamily violence.

General Model: Figure I



REFERENCES

Aldous, Joan, T. Condon, R. Hill, M. Straus, and I. Tallman
1971 Family Problem Solving: A Symposium on the Theoretical, Methodological, and Substantive Concerns. Hinsdale, Illinois: Dryden.

Aldous, Joan
1978 Family Careers. New York: John Wiley and Sons.

Appley, Mortimer H. and Richard Trumbull (eds.)
1967 Psychological Stress. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts.

Appley, Mortimer H. and Richard Trumbull
1977 "On the concept of psychological stress." Pp. 58-66 in Alan Monat and Richard S. Lazarus (eds.) Stress and Coping. New York: Columbia University Press.

Bandura, A.
1973 Aggression: A Social Learning Analysis. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Bandura, Albert
1977 Social Learning Theory. Englewood Cliffs, N.H.: Prentice-Hall.

Bandura, Albert and Richard H. Walters
1963 Social Learning and Personality Development. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Conger, Rand D., Robert L. Burgess, and Carol Barrett
1979 "Child abuse related to life changes and perceptions of illness: Some preliminary findings." The Family Coordinator 28, 1 (January): 73-78.

Cox, Tom
1978 Stress. Maryland: University Park Press.

Davidson, T.
1978 Conjugal Crime: Understanding and Changing the Wifebeating Pattern. New York: Hawthorn Books.

Dohrenwend, B.S. and B.P. Dohrenwend
1974 "A brief historical introduction to research of stressful life events." Pp. 1-5 in Dohrenwend and Dohrenwend (eds.), Stressful Life Events: Their Nature and Effects. New York: Wiley and Sons.

Farrington, Keith M.
1980 "Stress and family violence." Pp. 94-114 in Murray A. Straus and Gerald T. Hotaling (eds.), The Social Causes of Husband-Wife Violence. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Gelles, Richard J.
1972 The Violent Home. Beverly Hills, California: Sage Publications.

Gelles, Richard J.
1973 "Child Abuse as psychopathology: A sociological critique and reformulation." American Journal on Orthopsychiatry 43, (July): 611-621.

1974 "Child abuse as psychopathology: A sociological Critique and reformulation." 22 Pp. 190-204 in Steinmetz and Straus (eds.), Violence in the Family. New York: Harper and Row.

1976 "Abused wives: why do they stay?" Journal of Marriage and the Family 38, 4 (November):659-668.

Gelles, Richard J. and Murray A. Straus
1979a "Determinants of violence in the family: Toward a theoretical integration." In W.R. Burr, et al. (eds.), Contemporary Theories About the Family 1, research-based theories. New York: Free Press.

1979b "Violence in the american family." Journal of Social Issues 35, 2:15-39.

Gil, David G.
1971 "Violence against children." Journal of Marriage and the Family, 33, 4 (November):637-648.

Goode, William J.
1971 "Force and violence in the family." Journal of Marriage and the Family 33, 4 (November):624-635.

Hill, Reuben
1958 "Generic features of families under stress." Social Casework 39 (February-March):139-150.

Hogan, Dennis P.
1978 "The variable order of events in the life course." American Sociological Review 42 (August):573-586.

1980 "The transition of adulthood as a career contingency." American Sociological Review 45 (April):261-276.

Holland, John L.
1959 "A theory of vocational choices." Journal of Counseling Psychology 6 (January):34-45.

Holmes, Thomas H., and Richard H. Rahe
1967 "The social readjustment rating scale." Journal of Psychosomatic Research 11:213-218.

Justice, B., and R. Justice
1976 The Abusing Family. New York: Human Science Press.

Kanter, Rosabeth Moss
1977 Work and Family in the United States: A Crucial Review and Agenda for Research and Policy. New York: Russell Sage.

Kampe, C.H. et al.
1962 "The battered child syndrome." Journal of the American Medical Association 181 (July):105-112.

Kohn, M.L.
1969 Class and Conformity: A Study in Values. Homewood, Illinois: Dorsey Press.

Lazarus, Richard
1967 "Cognitive and personality factors underlying threat and coping." Pp. 151-181 in Mortimer H. Appley and Richard Trumbull (eds.), Psychological Stress. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts.

Lazarus, Richard S.
1966 Psychological Stress and the Coping Process. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company.

Marsden, Dennis
1978 "Sociological perspectives on family violence." Pp. 103-133 in J.P. Martin (ed.), Violence in the Family. New York: John Wiley and Sons.

Marsden, Dennis and David Owens
1975 "The Jekyll and Hyde marriages." New Society 32, 657 (May):333-335.

McGrath, Joseph E.
1970 "A conceptual formulation for research on stress." Pp. 10-21 in Joseph E. McGrath (ed.), Social and Psychological Factors in Stress. Chicago: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Mechanic, David
1962 Students Under Stress: A Study in the Social Psychology of Adaptation. New York: Free Press.

Oppenheimer, Valerie Kincade
1974 "The life-cycle squeeze: The interaction of men's occupational and family life cycles." Demography, ii, 2 (May):227-245. Reprint.

Owens, David M. and Murray A. Straus
1975 "The social structure of violence in childhood and approval of violence as an adult." Aggressive Behavior 1 (February):193-211.

Pearlin, Leonard I. and Carmi Schooler
1978 "The structure of coping." Journal of Health and Social Behavior 19 (March):2-21.

Prescott, Suzanne and Carol[illegible]n Letko
1977 "Battered wo[illegible]n: A social psychological perspective." Pp. 72-96 in Maria Roy (ed.), Battered Women: A Psycho Sociological Study of Domestic Violence. New York: VanNostrand Reinhold Co.

Samuel, Yitzhak and Noah Lewin-Epstein
1979 "The occupational situs as a predictor of work values." American Journal of Sociology 85, 3:625-639,

Scott, Robert and Alan Howard
1970 "Models of stress." Pp. 259-278 in Sol Levine and Norman A. Scotch (eds.), Social Stress. Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company.

Selye, Hans
1976 The Stress of Life. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Shwed, John A. and Murray A. Straus
1979 "The military environment and child abuse.: Unpublished paper.

Steele, B.F. and C.B. Pollack
1968 "A psychiatric study of parents who abuse infants and small children." In R.E. Helfer and C.H. Kempe (eds.), The Battered Child. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Steinmetz, Suzanne K.
1971 "Occupation and physical punishment: A response to Straus." Journal of Marriage and the Family 33,4 (November):664-676.

1977a The Cycle of Violence: Assertive, Aggresive, and Abusive Family Interaction. New York: Praeger.

1977b "The use of force for resolving family conflict: The t.aining ground for abuse." The Family Coordinator 26, 1 (January):19-26.

Steinmetz, Suzanne K. and Murray A. Straus
1974 "Intrafamily violence." Pp. 3-25 in Steinmetz and Straus (eds.), Violence in the Family. New York: Harper and Row.

Straus, Murray A.
1971 "Some social antecedents of physical punishment: A linkage theory interpretation." Journal of Marriage and the Family 33, 4 (November): 658-663.

Straus, Murray A., Richard J. Gelles and Suzanne K. Steinmetz
1980 Behind Closed Doors. New York: Anchor Press.